

# 741.5

CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY

# CREEPS

HAUNTED HORRORS & FAMOUS MONSTERS

OCTOBER 2019 - NO. 34

PLUS...BEHOLD!!! THE PROTONG

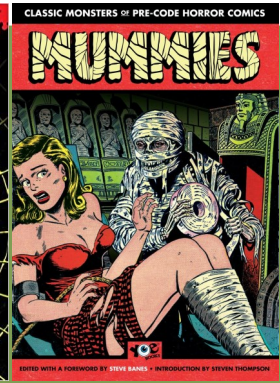
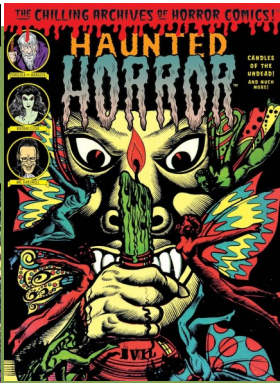
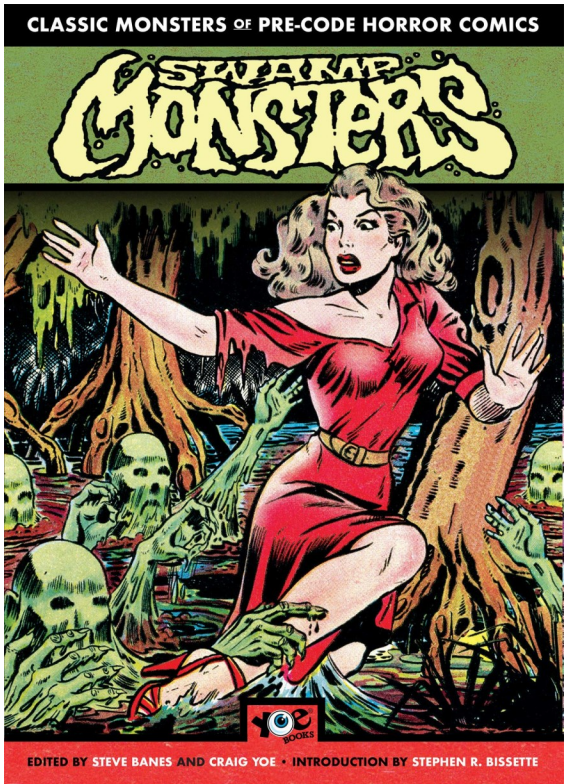


The Comics & Graphic Novel Bulletin of

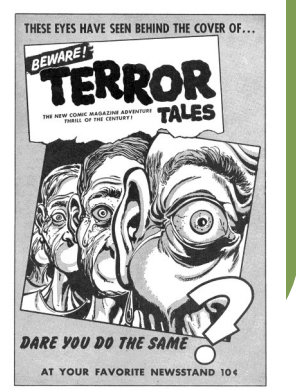


Lexington Public Library  
Reading Is Just the Beginning!





Swamp monsters have always been among my fave kinds of fiends. But until the simultaneous debut of DC's Swamp Thing and Marvel's macabre Man-Thing in the early 1970s, muck-men didn't get a lot of play in comic books. There was postwar horror hero the Heap, and...the sundry bog beasts slopping and sliming their way through *Swamp Monsters!* Available from Central, the latest collection from those excavators of the obscure and execrable at Yoe! Books brings us were-gators and frogmen—no, not scuba divers, actual *frog men*—along with swamp witches and zombies moaning among the bulrushes, as well as some actual menaces from the mire. Like the other volumes of Yoe's *Chilling Archives of Horror Comics*, *Swamp Monsters* is culled from the same notorious pre-Code comics as their other titles. From established lines slumming in the graveyard like Quality, Harvey and Fawcett (*image right*) to Atom Age upstarts such as ACG, St. John and Comic Media to the squadron of fly-by-night outfits helmed by Stanley Morse, these compilations give overdue exposure to the many publishers whose output was overwhelmed, then and now, by that of EC, Atlas/Marvel and DC. Some stories follow the EC formula of domestic angst and snap endings; others are deranged fantasias of lovesick goblins and rooster-hating devils. Some of the art is accomplished: stately Lou Cameron, the young and sassy Andru & Esposito, Bob Powell's hallucinogenic layouts. Some looks like it was drawn with a charred stick and inked with a tongue depressor. Thing is, the crap is often creepier than the cream. Hey, that's comics! Reserve the terrific tomes above at [lexpublib.org/](http://lexpublib.org/)



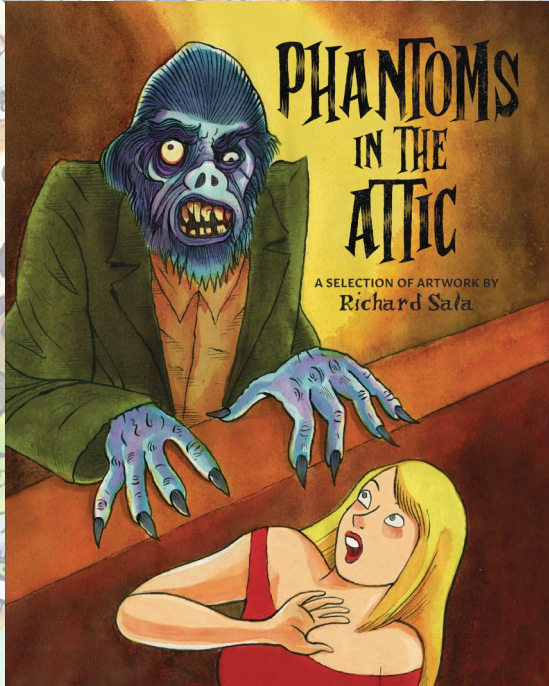
H.P. LOVECRAFT'S  
**AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS**  
VOLUME ONE  
**GOU TANABE**  
(DARK HORSE MANGA)



Having adapted previous works of the seminal fantasist H.P. Lovecraft, Gou Tanabe turns to the Providence prophet's short novel, *At the Mountains of Madness*. Tanabe's richly detailed drawings bring to chilly life the vast Antarctic expanse and weird subterranean spaces through which an intrepid crew from Miskatonic University pursue an increasingly unearthly mystery. The solemn pacing recreates Lovecraft's mode of horror, based more on dread than shock. Even those who don't like *manga* should get this illustrated classic from Central and Eastside.

Richard Sala loves to draw monsters. And maniacs. And mad scientists. And werewolves and weirdos, creeps and cultists, gorgons and gargoyles. And girls. Lots of girls. Really cute girls. Some of them are damsels in distress, like Peculia and Delphine. Some of them are asskickers of the arcane, like foul-mouthed detective Judy Dhood and gun-toting vigilante Violenzia. But all are drawn in Sala's unmistakable style, a fearsome but fun rejuvenation of past masters of the macabre such as Edward Gorey, Charles Addams and Matt Fox.

Imagine if Dario Argento directed an anime version of Sheridan Le Fanu's sapphic vampire classic *Carmilla* in which the heroine is a furry and you've got the broad strokes of *When I Arrived at the Castle* by Canadian cartoonist Emily Carroll. Carroll's gift for the uncanny was showcased in her popular collection of weird tales *Through the Woods* (still available via LPL TEEN). In *Castle*, Carroll cranks up the body horror and emotional terror. Her style is a blend of comics, manga, storybooks and novels, often using full-page images (*below*) for both scares and symbolism. It's haunting, and gruesome, so reader beware. Get it at Central and Tates Creek.



An inveterate sketcher, Sala has stacks of art for the sake of art quite separate from graphic novels like *The Chuckling Whatsit* and *The Bloody Cardinal* (still available via [lexpublib.org.](http://lexpublib.org/)) Now Fantagraphics has released an Oversize collection of that work. Full-page watercolors, spot illustrations and short comics hand-picked by Sala cover his now decades-long career, from the inky Groszian tableaus of his new wave youth to the more suave and vivid pin-ups of today. You'll find *Phantoms in the Attic* at Central!

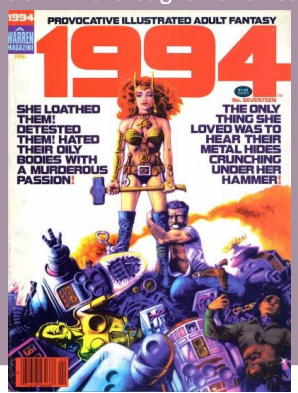
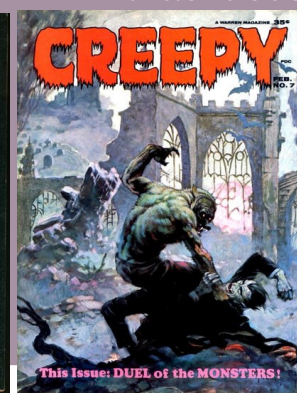
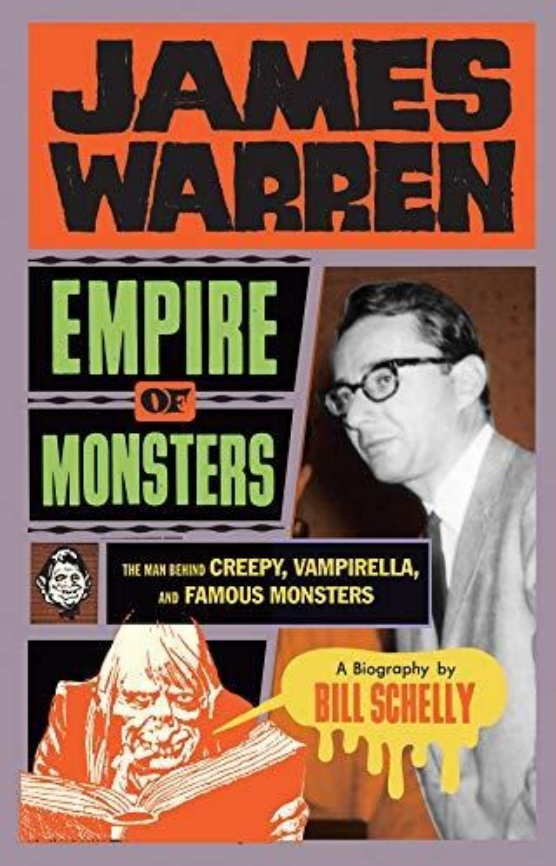


**WHEN I ARRIVED AT THE CASTLE**  
EMILY CARROLL  
(KOYAMA PRESS)



The history of American publishing was made by innovators such as Frank Munsey, creator of the pulp magazine; Hugo Gernsback, who gave science fiction its name; Bernarr McFadden, who invented both fitness culture and the "true confession" genre; and, of course, Hugh Hefner, who took the concept of men's magazines to stratospheric heights of influence and profitability. Hefner was the inspiration for many a would-be media mogul. Hef's example shined especially bright for James Warren. That light remained undimmed even after Warren's attempt to copy *Playboy* got the young go-getter hung with an obscenity beef in his hometown, Philadelphia. Warren chalked up that failure to experience and moved on to his one true innovation: the first monster movie magazine. Slapped together from material owned by primordial fanboy Forrest J. Ackerman, *Famous Monsters of Filmland* quickly sold out of

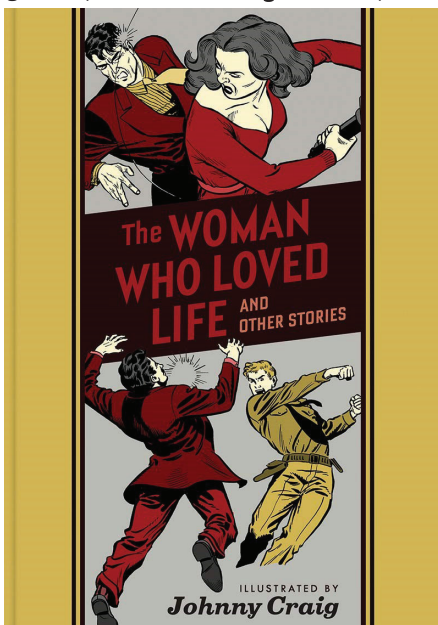
its first issue. It arguably created a new subculture (see 741.5 #4 April 2017); it definitely served as the foundation of a new publishing empire. For decades, Warren Publications provided for millions of comics fans a bridge from a childhood of Superman and *Scamp* to a young adulthood of wolfmen and *Vampirella*. As described in Bill Schelly's biography, *Empire of Monsters* (Fantagraphics), James Warren lived life like he was the big shot he thought he was. He fought crooked distributors, reactionary wholesalers and disgruntled contributors, not to mention competitors ranging from "shoddy duplicates" like *Weird* and *Psycho* to Mighty Marvel itself. All while shilling merch like the famous pin-up *left*, the stuff of fannish dreams. Go to Beaumont and Central to read about the man who brought horror comics back from the dead.





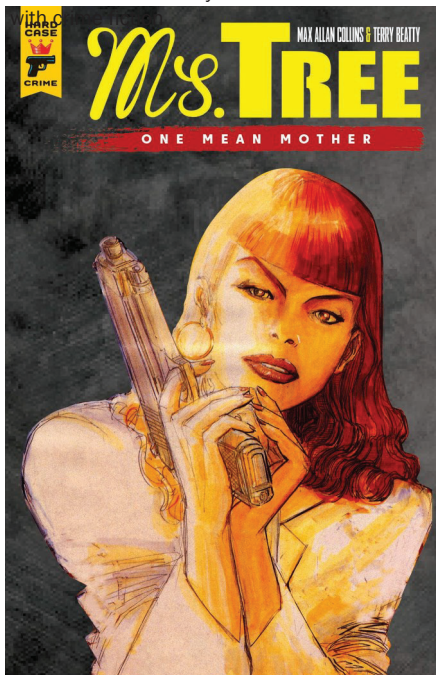


Like **Richard Sala**, fellow creepster cartoonist **Charles Burns** got his start in the alternative comics scene of the 1990s. But unlike **Sala**, Burns has returned to his punk rock roots time and again. The most recent example is the Fantagraphics collection of **Burn's** DIY mag *Free Sh\*t*. A giveaway originally published in the basic 8-page black & white mini-comics format, *FS* was made up of sketches both rough and finished, character designs, art exercises—such as tracings from old romance comics—and other ephemera. It's a glimpse of the rough heart beating beneath the cool exterior of **Burn's** famously sleek, slick art. Get *FS* from Central and Northside. Meanwhile, one of **Burn's** influences, **Johnny Craig**, is the subject of the latest volume from the EC Artists' Library. Just as *Doctor of Horror* by Graham Ingels (still available at [lexpublib.org](http://lexpublib.org)) reprinted work from the pre-"New Trend" titles, so does *The Woman Who Loved Life* (Fantagraphics). **Craig** was one of the first regular contributors to what was then a struggling undercard outfit, writing and drawing for titles like *Saddle Justice* and *War Against Crime*. Even amid such generic postwar fare, **Craig** had star power.

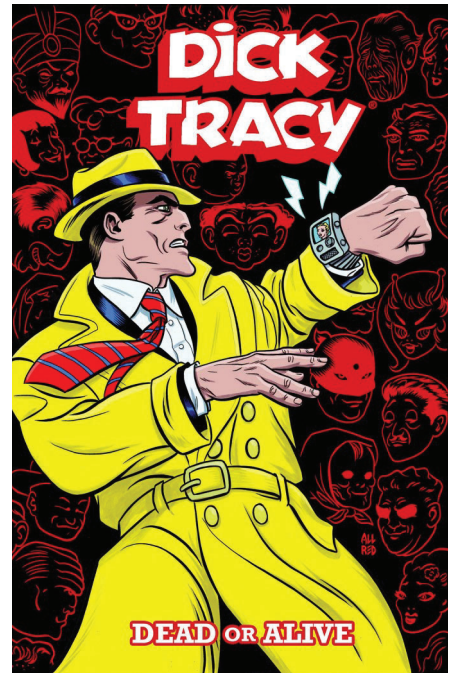


## MEANWHILE

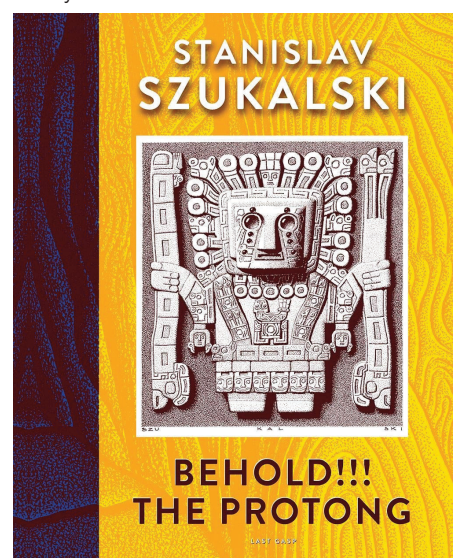
His inventive layouts, well-placed blacks and use of wordless panels brought a modern flair to the timeworn plots of "Madman", "Zombie!" and "Portfolio in Death." And despite his own belief that he was bad at drawing the ladies, **Craig's** stories often focused on the plight of women in a man's world, from the title story to such harrowing tales as "Mute Witness to Murder" and "Edna Sunday". Fans of classic comics and crime fiction should nab *The Woman Who Loved Life* from Central. That's also the home of the latest *Hard Case Crime* graphic novel. But whereas the other HCC books were originals, *Ms. Tree: One Mean Mother* reprints earlier work—not the stories that introduced the distaff dick back in 1983, but those done for DC's *Ms. Tree Quarterly* in the early 1990s. Both writer **Max Allan Collins** and artist **Terry Beatty** stood out from the madding crowd of the early 80s indie comics boom. Like many of his peers, **Collins** was a fanboy. But his obsession was



crime fiction of the hard-boiled school. **Collins** wanted to be **Mickey Spillane**, not **Stan Lee**. Likewise, **Beatty's** low-key, basic style was a stark contrast to the flash and filigree of **Cha-ykin**, **Truman** and other stars of the direct sales market. Never a natural cartoonist, his stiff figures, stagey backgrounds and rudimentary layouts owed more to the cramped aesthetic of modern newspaper strips than the page-filling panache of contemporary comic books. Hardly more than cult figures in the comics scene, the duo has been far more successful in the world of daily syndication. **Beatty** went on to draw the classic adventure strip *The Phantom* before taking over *Rex Morgan M.D.* **Collins** became one of the mavens of mystery fiction based on his own work and his inheritance of both the **Spillane** estate and the writing chores on *Dick Tracy*. **Tracy's** influence on comic books goes back to the beginnings of the industry—the first issue (of 1356) of Dell's flagship *Four Color Comics* featured **Chester Gould's** square-jawed crime buster—and publishers continue to pro-



mote the trench-coated terror of the underworld. The latest examples are the upcoming *Dick Tracy Forever* and the current *Dead or Alive* by **Richie (Spy Seal) Tommaso** and the **Michael Allred** family. Featuring many classic *Tracy* villains—Big Boy, the Mole, Flat-top, BB Eyes—this IDW update stays true to the character while opening up his saga to 21st Century influences. Meanwhile, an artist who could have been a major influence on the 20th Century never got his chance due to WWII and his own demented ideas. Polish artist **Stanislaw Szukalski** had a sweet deal going in his homeland until the Nazis invaded. **Szukalski** escaped to California, home of mad geniuses. Impressive in itself, **Szukalski's** work is given some four-color flair by its subject: his pseudo-scientific philosophy of Zermatism, which argues that the ever-present threat to civilization is the *yetinsyn*, evil offspring of humans and, basically, Bigfoot. Though not comics, fans will find much of interest in *Behold!!! The Protong*—it's as if **Jack Kirby** actually believed the Inhumans were real. This primo example of lovely lunacy can be found at Central. **BEHOLD!!!**



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